



**Creating Safe and
Drug-Free Schools**

THE Challenge

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“We are all living examples of social, emotional, ethical and civic teaching in everything we do: intentionally, consciously and helpfully or not.”

—Jonathan Cohen,
National School Climate Center

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Jonathan Cohen on School Climate: Engaging the Whole Village, Teaching the Whole Child

Jonathan Cohen is the cofounder and president of the National School Climate Center (formerly the Center for Social and Emotional Education). He is adjunct professor in psychology and education at Columbia University, adjunct professor in education at City University of New York and a practicing clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst. Cohen has worked in and with K–12 schools for over 30 years in a variety of roles: as a teacher, program developer, school psychologist, consultant, psycho-educational diagnostician and mental health provider.



Jonathan Cohen

1. How would you define “school climate”?

The following definition of school climate and a positive, sustained school climate was developed by the National School Climate Council, which is collaboratively led by the National School Climate Center and the Education Commission of the States. It synthesizes current thinking and research about school climate.

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes: norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment (National School Climate Center, 2010).

2. How do you think school climate affects academic achievement? What does the research tell us?

Over the last 30 years a growing body of empirical research has shown that a positive and sustained school climate is associated with and may be predictive of positive youth development, effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts, student learning and academic achievement, increased student graduation rates, and teacher retention. (*For recent and detailed summaries of this research, see references at the end of this interview.*)

3. Is that research affecting policies and practices?

There has been a terrible gap between school climate research and policy and practice. But the National School Climate Council has established standards that recognize these aspects of school life (National School Climate Council, 2009) and the need to measure these aspects, since we know that in many cases they are not being measured. In addition, our center offers many guidelines and tools for school communities to use in measuring and improving school climate.

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The U.S. Department of Education and a growing number of state departments of education are examining ways to use school climate to organize the many data-driven processes that encompass a broad range of pro-social efforts that protect children and promote learning.

4. How can champions of school climate better respond to the available research to create data driven improvement systems?

Below are six steps that will help to close the gap between school climate research and school practices:

1. Define school climate in ways that are aligned with recent research;
2. Recommend that schools routinely and comprehensively evaluate school climate, recognizing student, parent and school personnel “voice” as well as all of the major dimensions (e.g. safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the environment) that shape school climate;
3. Adopt standards for positive school climate as well as school climate assessment procedures;
4. Use school climate assessment as a measure of accountability;
5. Encourage teacher preparation programs that give teachers and administrators the tools to evaluate classroom [and] school climates and take steps to use these findings to promote a climate for learning; and
6. Increase research on the evaluation and dissemination of resources focused on improving school climate (Cohen, Fege & Pickeral, 2009).

5. What is the most important thing a school can do to improve its climate?

I believe that the most important thing a school community can do is to continually learn and work together to understand what school climate-related strengths and needs exist and to use this information to collaboratively develop instructional and systemic or schoolwide improvement efforts. Schools need to measure school climate with scientifically sound survey instruments that are comprehensive in that they (1) give a voice to all involved—students, school personnel, and parents or guardians, and (2) assess the major

dimensions of school climate: safety, relationships, teaching, learning and the institutional environment. School climate improvement is a *continuous* process that must include the following steps:

1. Plan and prepare for the next phase of the improvement process.
2. Evaluate the climate.
3. Understand the evaluation findings and create an action plan.
4. Implement the action plan.
5. Begin the cycle anew.

By definition, effective school improvement efforts involve the “whole village”—students, parents and guardians, school personnel and community leaders. We now have guidelines and detailed sets of tools that support school leadership teams and communities in addressing the tasks associated with the five improvement steps noted above.

6. What part does teacher job satisfaction play in school climate?

School climate has a profound impact on teachers’ job satisfaction. Naturally, how safe teachers feel, how connected they are to the school, how satisfying their relationships are with students and fellow adults all powerfully color how they feel about teaching in a given school. Too often teachers do not feel safe, supported and effective as educators, which is one of the important reasons why close to 50 percent drop out of the profession within their first five years of teaching (Anderson, 2008). And, naturally, the way teachers feel about being in school has a big impact on their relationships with students and their teaching style.

7. How do you suggest that teacher education programs be expanded to include training in school climate?


School and classroom climate need to be explicit topics and ongoing facets of all teacher education programs. Climate issues will always shape and even determine education and school improvement outcomes. However, my impression is that very few programs include much in their curricula about school climate.

While teacher education programs do include information and guidelines about classroom management, I find that the vast majority of teachers I work with say

that they have not learned enough about how to effectively manage classrooms and too often the model they have learned is a punitive one. The Bank Street College of Education in New York City is an exception. Since its inception in the 1940s, it has focused on promoting reflective educators who are attuned to the whole child.

Education programs can provide more instruction about school climate research: they can teach classroom management strategies that create a climate for learning in classrooms and the school as a whole; they can introduce future teachers to the climate assessment tools and the process for planning, implementation and evaluation; and they can prepare teachers to actively promote a positive climate.

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Is Our School Climate Positive?

Learning occurs within a mix of students' cognitive and emotional abilities, social influences and environmental factors, most of which interplay with the school's climate. We know that there are many paths to learning and we know that the school climate sometimes helps and sometimes hurts the process. When we take a closer look at a school's climate, we are able to objectively identify areas that need attention so students are better able to learn.

The overarching conditions for learning that influence school climate—school engagement, school safety and school environment—are flexible enough that any school, no matter its size, location or budget, can monitor and take steps to improve them.

Using this framework, the components of a positive school climate include:

Engagement

- **Caring relationships among and between students, staff and families**
- **Respect for diversity within the school community**
- **Active school participation among students and their families, including effective school–community partnerships**

Safety

- **A physically safe setting free from substance use and violence**
- **An emotionally safe setting free from bullying and harassment**

Environment

- **High academic standards for every student**
- **Clear rules and policies that are fair and consistently enforced**
- **Mental and physical health supports for students that promote fitness, good nutrition and mental well-being**
- **A clean, functioning, hazard-free physical environment**

Positive climates are those that encourage every student to feel safe, connected and



academically engaged at school. It takes a lot of work to make this happen, even when it looks easy from the outside. And it can be done in any school, even when it looks impossible from the outside.

The Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Early College in Denver is a public school with a history of poor academic performance and significant discipline problems. Principal Allen Smith said, “When I first walked through the hallways like everybody else, I had the perception that MLK was this horrible school.”

During Smith's tenure, which began in 2007, the school has, however, undergone a significant transformation. According to Smith, discipline infractions have been reduced by 60 percent and attendance for both middle school and high school students is a combined 93 percent. The school was targeted for revitalization by Denver Public Schools in 2005, and Smith and his staff have worked hard to improve the school climate and student outcomes.

The MLK Early College, formerly a middle school only, now includes a college-prep high school that serves sixth through 12th grades. Staff and community partners provide rigorous support for students as they work toward college. Students must meet strict application requirements to attend the high school, which begins with ninth grade.

Since the transformation began, Smith tells *The Challenge* that every student

in the inaugural senior class of 2010 has graduated—each one accepted into a four-year college or university. And the school continues to improve its climate for future graduates.

Measure the Climate Routinely

School staff, students and parents—each group has a unique perspective about its school climate. Each group's viewpoint offers valuable insights about the classroom activities, campus events and relationships that shape the school's culture.

A well-designed climate assessment survey will reveal patterns of behavior and attitudes that administrators may use to guide procedural changes in order to improve school climate and academic progress. Combined with student test scores, attendance records and graduation rates, these data create a comprehensive view of the underlying factors that contribute to a school's success and its challenges.

Scientifically based and tested:

A reliable survey is based on the research about school climate. The best student surveys ask questions about topics such as relationships, emotional safety, physical safety, school engagement, and health-related behaviors, including substance use, nutrition and fitness. Staff surveys ask about topics like campus safety and supervision, staff morale, teacher support and perceptions of student behavior. Good assessments must be tested and adjusted to ensure appropriate validity and reliability. Validity refers to the survey's ability to measure what it intends to. Reliability refers to its ability to measure consistently from one survey administration to the next.

Easy to use: Many schools now use online surveys administered from a secure website and completed in the school's computer lab. Student surveys consist of easily answered questions that can take as few as 20 minutes to complete, depending upon the students' ages and abilities. Staff and parent surveys are also completed online and typically take 15 minutes or less

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The Right Thing to Do: Spotlight on Sullivan County, Tenn.

The Challenge spoke with Jack Barnes shortly before his retirement as director of schools in Sullivan County, Tenn. Barnes has devoted 37 years to public education in Sullivan County and has served at every grade level. The county serves approximately 11,500 students in northeast Tennessee and is among the largest counties in the state.

During the late 1990s, an incident described as “racial unrest” at Sullivan East High School in Sullivan County, Tenn., led to a complaint filed by the U.S. Department of Justice. The case was settled out of court and the school agreed, among other things to (1) train all staff and students on the school district’s policies prohibiting harassment and discrimination; (2) conduct a school climate assessment; and (3) develop a plan to prevent, identify and remedy harassment and discrimination. Documents related to the case are available online at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/edo/documents/classlist.php>.

The Sullivan County Department of Education decided to use this incident as an opportunity to focus on school climate throughout the district’s 28 school buildings. The school district contracted with Main Street Academix to conduct an assessment on school climate by surveying all students, staff and parents from every school. The district also partnered with the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence to annually train all employees, including bus drivers, cafeteria and janitorial staff, on common types of bias, including those related to race, gender, religion and disabilities.

Assessment results and analysis identified key problem areas in the school, such as location hot spots, behaviors, patterns and times of day. Initially, there was resistance from administrators and teachers to the “climate profile” as findings showed that students’ views differed from those of the adults. These results, however, became the foundation for each school’s action plan, and the district then began to enlist the help of students—as well as adults—to work together to improve their schools.

The surveys have evolved into an important component of the *school improvement plans* and are administered on a bi-annual basis. A diverse group of students are chosen to participate on *respected leadership teams* where they are trained and empowered to help with the surveys. Staff and students in each building and throughout all district levels continue to use the results to identify ways to improve school climate.

“Our goal is to give our students and staff the best opportunities possible with the resources we have.”

—Jack Barnes
Former Director of Schools,
Sullivan County, Tenn.

The impact of this work is beginning to show positive results. Several areas of improvement include:

- **Academic performance.** Data from 2003–08 indicate an 11 percent increase in academic outcomes based on standardized testing scores.
- **Disciplinary referrals.** The district is seeing a decrease in problem behaviors and issues through times and places of transition (i.e., in the hallways during class changes, between fifth grade and middle school, etc.).
- **Communication.** Schools document increased positive communication among adults, among students, and between adults and students. Adults use the “same language” as students to discuss with them issues such as harassment; the “code of silence” has been broken; teachable moments are not ignored; and barriers have been minimized.

Barnes continues to emphasize how important it is for schools to:

- Engage students as partners—they know what’s going on. Empower them, give them a voice, and provide them with opportunities for civic engagement;
- Enlist administrative support. It is needed at all levels—the district, the school level, and the building level;
- Encourage teachers and staff to model

respect and civility. Actions speak louder than words, especially when they don’t mirror each other;

- Review and improve school policies, procedures and rules. Promote consistent enforcement, ensure a process for dealing with complaints, and reinforce civility;


- Identify high-need times and places for increased supervision. Provide additional protection to increase safety and avoid unnecessary incidents;

- Acknowledge that students learn differently.

By differentiating instruction, the educational process addresses different learning styles and shows respect for individuals; and

- Take advantage of the teachable moments. Don’t ignore incidents in hallways, in the cafeteria or on the bus. Don’t let inappropriate remarks or behaviors go unchallenged.

Barnes reminds us that improving school climate and changing the environment takes time and patience. The process includes making the benefits of working together clear to school populations—not to add to requirements, but to enhance outcomes for all students and staff. He states, “Our goal is to give our students and staff the best opportunities possible with the resources we have.”

Note: Using the same contractors, Sullivan County Department of Education continues to assess and train all staff and students. The Board of Education approved the addition of 30 minutes to the school day to address the need for staff training, planning, colleague collaboration, and prevention and intervention efforts, and to make better use of instructional time. Each school uses the extra time based on specific school plans and needs. The district maintains its use and analysis of the annual and bi-annual *Assessment of School Climate* as a component in the development of each *School Improvement Plan*. 

School Climate Surveys Uncover the Extent of Bullying

A positive school climate is one that cultivates several positive characteristics, including a sense of safety for each and every student. Bullying that goes unchecked can shatter a young person's sense of well-being and safety, making it difficult if not impossible to learn.

Anyone can be the target of bullying. However, numerous research studies report that certain groups are more likely to experience bullying and are more vulnerable to its harmful impact. Children and adolescents who have certain physical or emotional traits or sexual orientation are at greater risk for physical, verbal



and relational bullying. For example, multiple studies find that overweight and obese children are more likely to be bullied than their normal-weight peers (Janssen, Craig, Boyce and Pickett, 2004). Similarly, Toronto researcher Faye Mishna (2003) reports that children with learning disabilities are more likely to be bullied. Other research indicates that youths who suffer medical conditions that affect appearance or ability are more likely to be bullied (Dawkins, 1996).

The same is true for students whose sexual orientation is lesbian, gay or bisexual; those who are questioning their sexual orientation; and those whose gender expression is different from their biological sex. Recent studies find that sexual minority youths and those perceived to be sexual minorities are subjected to bullying and verbal bias at higher rates than their heterosexual peers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., Tip sheet #33).

The outcomes for those who are bullied can be devastating. The body of research among social scientists and medical doctors indicates these youths are at greater risk for depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, physical ailments, truancy and suicide (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., Tip sheet #24). In this context, the school climate is not safe for bullied students or bystanders who may want to help but aren't sure how or if they'll be targeted next.

Dan Olweus (1993), a pioneer in the research and reduction of bullying, has long been an advocate for two basic principles to put an end to bullying behaviors: adults at school, and to a smaller degree at home, must be aware of the true extent of bullying among their youths; and the adults must commit to changing the situation.

School climate surveys discussed elsewhere in this issue of *The Challenge* are available to schools to clarify the extent and nature of bullying at school. Anti-bullying resources are available to assist schools that are committed to changing the culture of bullying among students.

For more information about this research, including prevalence, harmful effects, and action steps, visit the Stop Bullying Now! website. Tip sheets like *Bullying Among Children and Youth on Perceptions and Differences in Sexual Orientation* and *Bullying Among Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Needs* can be found at <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>.

All children, regardless of differences, deserve to be safe, healthy and supported in their classrooms, schools and communities.

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Additional Resources

National Education Association

Diversity toolkit is at <http://www.nea.org/tools/18834.htm>.

American Academy of Pediatrics

Information about sexual orientation is available at <http://www.aap.org/featured/sexualorientation.htm>.

Mental Health America (formerly the National Mental Health Association)

Factsheets on bullying and an anti-bullying campaign called *What Does Gay Mean?* are available at <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net>.

to complete. Results are confidential and no identifiers are collected. Online surveys cut down on the cost of survey administration and the time required to analyze results, which can be done automatically as soon as the survey closes. Expect reports to be delivered quickly with data that are easy to understand and use.

Comprehensive: The school climate evaluation must represent the entire school community. This includes at a minimum students and staff (including support personnel and administrators). If possible, parents should be surveyed as well. Each group sees things the others may not be aware of, and each has its own interpretation of events and the climate.

Versatile: Many surveys consist of a core set of questions and can be tailored with optional questions that are important to your school. If a particular issue, such as gang activity or truancy, appears to be a problem, address it in your climate survey. Assessment results must be made relevant for students and parents, teachers, administrators and school officials. At every level from practitioner to policymaker, school climate information can be used to make the classroom a safe and rich learning environment for each student.

Reliable assessments are available from school districts, state departments of education, and research organizations. Find more information online at the sites below:


American Institutes for Research
<http://www.air.org>

Barometers of School Safety <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/assessments/index.html>

California Healthy Kids Survey http://www.wested.org/cs/chks/print/docs/chks_home.html

Comprehensive School Climate Inventory
<http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php>

Minnesota Student Survey http://www.mnssc.state.mn.us/research_data.asp

Ohio School Climate Survey
<http://ohio.schoolclimate.net/sample/Home/tabid/235/Default.aspx> 

News From OSDFS and the Field

ED Announces Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Awards

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded \$38.8 million in Safe and Supportive Schools grants to support statewide measurement of, and targeted programmatic interventions to improve, conditions for learning in order to help schools improve safety and reduce substance use.

The grant award recipients are state education agencies in Arizona, California, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and Wisconsin. The award amounts range from \$1.7 million to \$5.9 million.

To best formulate intervention and prevention strategies and thereby ensure that schools are safe places for students to learn, schools should understand the issues their communities face and the conditions that may influence student risk behaviors. School communities are complex systems that include multiple stakeholders and interconnecting environmental factors that influence student health and safety. As such, comprehensive needs assessments of conditions for learning should include the evaluation of school engagement, school safety and the school environment.

Race to the Top Awards: Phases 1 and 2

Delaware and Tennessee were the two states winning awards in the first phase of the Race to the Top competition. Delaware will receive approximately \$100 million and Tennessee \$500 million over the next four years. The two states received high marks for the commitment to reform from key stakeholders, including elected officials, teachers, union leaders and business leaders. All school districts in each state committed to implementing Race to the Top reforms. Delaware and Tennessee have aggressive plans to improve teacher and principal evaluation, use data to inform instructional decisions, and turn around their lowest-performing schools.

In late August, 10 additional grantees were announced in the Race to the Top competition's second phase with awards ranging from \$75 million to \$700 million each. The District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island are the recipients of grants that will serve 13.6 million students and 980,000 teachers in 25,000 schools around the country.

OSDFS Announces Grant Awards

In FY 2010, OSDFS made grant awards in the following programs: Building State Capacity for Preventing Youth Substance Use and Violence; Cooperative Civic Education and Economic Education Exchange Program; Carol M. White Physical Education Program; Educational Facilities Clearinghouse; Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs; Emergency Management for Higher Education; Foundations for Learning Grants; Grants for Coalitions to Prevent and Reduce Alcohol Abuse at Institutions of Higher Education; Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems; Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse; Models of Exemplary, Effective, and Promising Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Programs on College Campuses; Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Grant Program; and Safe and Supportive Schools. Abstracts and award information is online at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html>.

OSDFS Safe and Supportive Schools News Bulletin

If you would like weekly e-mail updates on OSDFS programs, as well as other information related to school safety, substance abuse and violence prevention in education, and the promotion of student health and well-being, you may be interested in subscribing to the *OSDFS Safe and Supportive Schools News Bulletin*.

Subscription information is at <http://www2.ed.gov/news/newsletters/listserv/preventioned.html>. 

Research Findings

Research on Bullying Looks at Impact on Bystanders

Recent research discovered an increased risk to the mental health of students who witnessed, but had no involvement in, bullying among their peers at school. Observing bullying was found to predict elevated levels of substance use; worry about becoming a future target of bullying; conflicted feelings about intervening; and increased anxiety about peer relationships. Further, the findings indicated that 63 percent of students had been a bystander to bullying during the current school term. The study recommends increased attention to possible impacts on all students, “Overall, our findings add support to previous studies that recommend whole school approaches to tackling bullying.” Researchers surveyed 2,002 students ages 12 to 16 in northern England.

“Observing Bullying at School: The Mental Health Implications of Witness Status” Ian Rivers, V. Paul Poteat, Nathalie Noret, and Nigel Ashurst *School Psychology Quarterly*, Volume 24, No. 4, December 2009

View the article online at <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/spq-24-4-211.pdf>.

Resources

California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)

The CHKS gathers data from students and school staff that are used as a catalyst for positive change within schools and communities. The CHKS enables districts to identify the health and safety needs of students, establish program goals and monitor progress in achieving those goals. By sending a positive message on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and promoting the development of comprehensive school health programs, districts can help foster the school-community collaboration that is essential to tackling these critically important issues.

For more information on the CHKS, which is easily customized, visit http://www.wested.org/cs/chks/print/docs/chks_home.html.

The National School Climate Center (NSCC)

The National School Climate Center offers education and resources to support schools, districts and states in effectively aligning school climate policy with practice. The *School Climate Implementation Road Map* includes information, guidelines and, most important, tools designed to support school leaders and community members who want to improve school climate. NSCC offers the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), a research-based needs assessment that provides immediate feedback on how students, parents and school personnel perceive the school’s climate. The center also conducts a summer institute with an optional school climate improvement leader certification.

View the NSCC website at www.schoolclimate.org/.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV)

The Safe Communities-Safe Schools initiative at CSPV offers research-based assessment tools specific to elementary, middle and senior high school students, staff members and parents. Surveys contain core questions about topics related to school climate, safety, risky behaviors and protective factors. Student surveys can be tailored by adding optional questions about specific concerns, such as

Academic Achievement Tied to Positive School Climate

A review of the literature reveals that a growing body of empirical research indicates that positive school climate is associated with and predictive of academic achievement, school success, effective violence prevention, students’ healthy development, and teacher retention. The authors said, “There is a glaring gap between these research findings, on the one hand, and state departments of education, school climate policy, practice guidelines, and teacher education practice on the other.”

“School Climate: Research, Policy, Practice, and Teacher Education” Jonathan Cohen, Libby McCabe, Nicholas M. Michelli, and Terry Pickeral *Teachers College Record*, Volume 111, No. 1, 2009

View the article online at <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=15220>.



dating violence or weapon carrying. Schools administer these surveys online and receive a comprehensive report on their assessment results. As part of the package, they also receive technical assistance with next steps, such as strategic planning, program selection, information sharing and more.

The center’s website is <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools>.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

CASEL works to advance the science and evidence-based practice of social and emotional learning (SEL). The nonprofit organization publishes books, articles and briefs that synthesize scientific advances in SEL and explain their implications for practice. Major topics covered are the benefits of preschool through high school SEL programming; how SEL coordinates with other education priorities; research and training in implementation; assessment; school and district leadership development; education policies; and communications.

CASEL’s website is <http://www.casel.org>.

Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools Step by Step David M. Osher, Kevin Dwyer and Stephanie Jackson, 2003

This book of school improvement ideas provides strategies for the development, implementation and regulation of interventions. It includes a CD-ROM with an award-winning video, Spanish and English versions of the *Early Warning, Timely Response Guide* and *Action Guide*, and reproducible classroom materials. Schoolwide interventions focus on the social, ethical and emotional development of all students. Early interventions modify behavior patterns of students with minor behavioral issues. Intensive interventions engage students with significant emotional and behavioral disorders in appropriate interactions.

For more information, visit <http://store.cambiumlearning.com>.

University of Colorado at Boulder
Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence
483 UCB
Boulder, CO 80309
Phone: 303-492-1032
Fax: 303-492-2151
E-mail: informationcnl@thechallenge.org

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Professional Environment Plays Large Role in School Climate

Discussions of school climate are incomplete without including the professional climate among staff, teachers and administrators. District financial strain, concerns about job security and uncertainty about the future can negatively affect morale and job satisfaction. A focus on school climate and relationships among teachers, staff and administrators can be challenging to maintain in the midst of these pressures.

Trust is a core component of a strong professional climate and healthy administrator-teacher relationships, both of which, in turn, affect job satisfaction and teacher effectiveness. Studies on academic leadership and school climate show that trusting, supportive environments promote better job performance, ease the pain of change and encourage more effective collaboration. In addition, teachers who feel that they are safe in the workplace, have adequate supplies and access to professional development and career growth opportunities will have higher levels of

job satisfaction, according to Susan Moore Johnson at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2006, see S. M. Johnson's paper via the link at the end of this article to access a list of related resource materials).

Job satisfaction is an important factor in teacher turnover, which is a concern for many districts and the profession as a whole. As Jonathan Cohen mentioned in his interview included in this issue, nearly 50 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. According to an article by Richard Ingersoll (2003), "Almost half of all departures report as a reason either job dissatisfaction or the desire to pursue a better job, another career, or to improve career opportunities in or out of education."

The cost of teacher turnover can be measured in both dollars and outcomes for students. A 2007 national study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future found that the cost to recruit, hire, process and train one new teacher ranged from \$4,000 to \$18,000 depending on district size and location. In

addition, schools with high teacher turnover may have a more difficult time organizing, planning and implementing a strong, clear curriculum, including intervention programs that address school climate issues like truancy, bullying or substance abuse.

A healthy professional environment is vital to a positive school climate and, thus, important to the success of each student. School administrators can strengthen the relationships among their staff members through many actions. Consider these suggestions from the research literature mentioned below on academic leadership and climate:

- Provide emotional support to staff.
- Include teachers and staff in decision making.
- Support innovation in the classroom.
- Encourage teachers to be leaders.

(See this edition of *The Challenge* online at <http://www.thechallenge.org> for a list of related research materials.) 